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New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 62 to 82 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Danieli (Israel): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of this Committee. With your long experience, we are assured of skilful steering of our work. My delegation can assure you of its full cooperation.

In his recent address before the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel, Mr. David Levy, proposed a binding code of conduct for relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The purpose of such a code, on the eve of the resumed negotiations, would be to facilitate uninterrupted negotiations and crisis management and to create an atmosphere of dialogue. It would also contribute to renewed trust between the leaders and greater confidence and understanding between the peoples.

This code of conduct should include a mutual agreement rejecting violence as a means for achieving political goals and encouraging a framework of direct negotiations. It would also institutionalize permanent channels of communication, especially during times of crisis, and ensure the cessation of incitement to violence and enhance reconciliation and mutual respect. It would also contain a mutual undertaking to advance and encourage normalization, as well as support for regional activities.

There is no doubt that a similar code of conduct, based on similar principles, could also be instrumental in facilitating the ground rules required for the advancement of regional security and arms control efforts between the parties in the Middle East.

Concomitant with maintaining adequate military preparedness to contain radical regimes in the region and to prevent military adventurism, Israel aspires to achieve a regional security framework, encompassing all countries of the Middle East, to provide a cooperative multilateral response to all the security problems of the region.

True, in the present regional circumstances, this goal is not yet within our reach. Still, the future of the Middle East as a whole requires that the goal of a regional security framework be supported and nurtured constantly. Regional security dialogue and a gradual implementation of confidence-building measures, in parallel with the bilateral peace process between Israel and its neighbours and the abatement of hostilities between other long- time regional rivals, will enable more ambitious arms control and disarmament measures to be taken.

It should be remembered that, ultimately, it is the progress achieved in the transformation of the whole region into a more peaceful, stable and secure environment that will govern the pace and the scope of arms control measures in the region.

The Middle East could certainly learn from the experiences of other regions, where genuine efforts on the regional level have created mutually beneficial regional security frameworks. Still, there are several characteristics

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of the Middle East which affect, among other things, arms control and disarmament endeavours and their pace.

First, the region as a whole still lacks formal mutual recognition by and between all States, agreed mutual borders and a common acceptance of peaceful means as the only tools of regional policy.

Secondly, interregional relations are characterized by a multitude of conflicts and hostilities, rather than by shared values of democracy, pluralism and partnership.

Thirdly, there are shifting regional alliances and rivalries.

Fourthly, there is a lack of common understanding regarding the delineation of the region for regional security and arms control purposes.

Fifthly, there are multiple structural imbalances in such spheres as political culture and regime, geography, demography, structure of armed forces and distribution of natural resources and wealth.

Lastly, all of us hope that all States in the Middle East might move from considering their security perceptions as a zero-sum game to an evolving cooperative structure.

The multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security, established in the context of the Middle East peace process initiated in Madrid in 1991, has been recognized as the appropriate framework for discussing all outstanding issues pertinent to the regional security and arms control agenda. We regret that the promising discussions and activities of this Working Group have been brought to a halt by placing overly ambitious and politically unrealistic objectives on its agenda. We call upon all concerned in the region to demonstrate the required flexibility in order to overcome the disagreements that are hindering the continuation of the talks.

In this context, Israel attaches considerable importance to the participation of Syria and Lebanon in the Working Group, hoping that this might assist in the attainment of confidence-building and conventional arms control measures which will ultimately apply to all States in the region.

Israel attaches primacy to regional arrangements which attempt to provide an answer to security and stability problems in the entire region. At the same time, this approach has not prevented Israel from taking part in or supporting the concerted effort of the international community to curb the proliferation of conventional as well as non-conventional weapons and, where appropriate, from endorsing global agreements which could complement those to be established at the regional level.

The agenda of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, in relation to the work of this Committee, contains two items which are directly concerned with the Middle East. Those are agenda item 67, "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", and agenda item 74, entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East".

Much has already been said regarding a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Repetition of arguments and counter-arguments will not advance the issue.

The regional parties do not see eye to eye on some very basic premises, the required prerequisites and guidelines and/or the modalities of its eventual establishment.

All support the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Some agree that such a nuclear-weapon-free zone must take into account specific characteristics of the Middle East. But that alone serves as too narrow a basis for a common approach to this complex matter and task.

Moreover, there have been no promising developments recently that could make a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region more attainable in the near future — certainly not the advocacy of the destruction of Israel by some and the relentless pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery by several regional States which, at the same time, have pledged, by their accession to relevant international legal instruments, to forsake possession of such weapons.

The position of my Government on this subject is clear. After peaceful relations and reconciliation are established among all States in the region, Israel will most definitely want to see the establishment in the Middle East — through direct negotiations among all its members — of a zone free of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, as well as ballistic missiles, that is based on mutual and effective verification. This position is reflected in Israel's reply pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution 51/41, as set out in the report of the Secretary-General in document A/52/271 of 6 August 1997.

We see no reason to change this position. What should be changed in the Middle East, first and foremost, is the general state of military threat, instability, violence and unwillingness to renounce the use of force as a legitimate instrument of policy.

We have not seen in other regions any breakthrough in major arms control and disarmament endeavours as long as war was being advocated by some members of the region vis-à-vis their neighbours. The Secretary-General has acknowledged in his report that

> "a nuclear-weapon-free zone cannot be conceived of or implemented in a political vacuum, separate from the process of mutual reconciliation" [A/48/399, para. 22]

The agenda item entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East" reflects a transparent political motivation to single out the State of Israel and to divert attention from the true risk of proliferation in the Middle East region, which derives from such regional States as Iraq and Iran, which are engaged in ongoing clandestine efforts to preserve or to acquire military nuclear capabilities. No carefully worded, so-called mild resolution addressed to my country can conceal this fact.

As I have already mentioned, Israel supports and takes part in the concerted effort of the international community to curb the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, not least through its adherence to export control mechanisms. With this commitment to non-proliferation in mind, Israel voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 2373 (XXII) of 1968 adopting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It also welcomed the indefinite extension of the Treaty. At the same time, Israel does not find in the NPT an adequate response to its security problems and regional concerns. In our own region, NPT membership by itself is not a panacea, and events in the Middle East in this context have, unfortunately, proved that point time and again.

Israel's attitude towards the NPT has become, unjustifiably, a major subject of criticism in annual resolutions submitted under this agenda item. No other United Nations Member State — including those that, for national security reasons, have found it impossible to join the NPT — has ever been subject to repeated condemnatory resolutions regarding the question of their Treaty membership.

There is no place for criticism of Israel based on external perceptions of Israel's political and security situation or on subjective national experiences and lessons in other regions. This subject has always been, and will remain, a distinct question of Israel's sovereign security interests. We therefore call upon all delegations to resist the annual temptation to demonstrate their support for the NPT in terms of Israel's condemnation. It is about time for the renouncement of such discriminatory practices by the General Assembly and its Committees to become an integral element of the overall concept of United Nations reform.

If this Committee wishes to be of any relevance to the evolving situation in the Middle East with respect to the real and dangerous consequences of proliferation, it should address itself to the dangers posed by Iran and Iraq.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel recently put this reminder before the General Assembly:

> "It was only a few years ago that the entire world was forced into forming a coalition to combat an aggressive dictator who sought to conquer a neighbouring country and to terrorize our entire region. Today, we face new and even more extreme dangers, but the lessons of recent experience have not been learned, and many countries turn a blind eye to the threat.
>
> "The leadership of Iran continues to speak in terms that threaten the State of Israel and call for its destruction. Yet the international community continues to remain deaf and refuses to speak out against Iran's policies, declarations and actions.
>
> "Iran's efforts ... represent the greatest threat to security and stability in the Middle East and beyond. The ramifications of Iran's weapons programme extend far beyond the geographical confines of our region. They threaten the security of other members of the international community and their interests." [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 15th meeting]

It is therefore incumbent upon all Member States that have an interest in preventing further deterioration and dangerous developments to exercise the full weight of their influence and to take concrete steps before it is too late. The lessons taught by the course of events in Iraq should be heeded.

Our concern regarding the Iranian drive to acquire nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery should not allow us to forget Iraq's continued defiance of the relevant Security Council resolutions and its persistent efforts to undermine the activities of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), to conceal its true capabilities in terms of weapons of mass destruction and to mislead the Security Council and the international community as a whole.

The recent report (S/1997/774), dated 6 October, of the Secretary-General to the Security Council regarding UNSCOM activities in Iraq reads as follows:

> "The Commission is convinced of the need for the Council to insist that Iraq meet its obligation to disclose fully all of its prohibited weapons and associated programmes. There is no substitute for this whole truth, both as such and as the mainstay of the effective discharge by the Commission of its mandate. This is a crucial requirement." [S/1997/774, para. 151]

Against that background, attempts to normalize relations with the Iraqi regime serve to undermine the overriding objective adopted by the entire international community to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction.

Allow me to say a few words on the issue of the United Nations Programme for Reform in relation to disarmament and arms control. Israel appreciates the intention to respond effectively to the priorities of Member States in this sphere by managerial reorganization of Secretariat capacities, as described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950).

We have to make sure that in the process the viability of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is preserved and even strengthened. One should also honestly consider what purposes and tasks should be served by other multilateral structures such as this Committee or the United Nations Disarmament Commission, and are there any practical results to be expected from another costly "debating society" such as the fourth special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV)?

This should be done with a view to better reflecting growing global confidence and cooperation as well as the growing urgency to stem unprecedented and destabilizing conventional arms build-ups and the clandestine pursuit of weapons of mass destruction in certain regions.

Agreements or treaties to be negotiated and concluded should become subject to truly universal adherence and should not remain the concern of like-minded States only. Furthermore, the verification mechanisms of treaties should be complemented by reliable enforcement to ensure that arms control obligations are not taken lightly and that countries that behave otherwise are punished.

In the context of the Committee's programme of work, we must always remember that the millions who have perished as a result of war, armed conflict and civil strife since 1945 bear witness to the sheer and utter destructiveness of weapons classified as "conventional". The problems, therefore, lie with the reckless use of arms of all categories by irresponsible regimes.

It is in this context that my delegation appreciates the views expressed by many Member States in recent days and the renewed interest in curbing the proliferation of conventional weapons, including small arms. I believe that the initiatives, particularly in some of the African subregions, to devise practical and implementable measures to limit the proliferation of small arms should be encouraged and supported. These attest to the fact that, beyond the importance of legal instruments, those agreed practical steps advance regional security and arms control more than anything else.

I wish now to make a few concluding remarks. The peace process between Israel and its neighbours may witness temporary setbacks or periods of stalemate due to the crucial issues at stake and their implications for the national interests of the parties concerned. Yet one should not lose sight of the remarkable achievements of this relatively young process, initiated 20 years ago against all the odds and in the face of many hurdles and much scepticism. The Israeli-Arab relations of 1997 are different in many positive respects, as a result of the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and the historic reconciliation with the Palestinians.

Future prospects for regional security and arms control in the Middle East as a whole depend on the pace of its transformation into a more hospitable and peaceful part of the globe. Israeli-Arab relations are only one element of a much larger and complex Middle Eastern picture. An improved political climate and the gradual building of trust and confidence through regional security and arms control measures could be mutually reinforcing. Both should be goals to which all should aspire and which all should pursue.

Ms. Al-Alawi (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like at the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Bahrain, to convey to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are convinced that, thanks to your competence, you will be able to successfully conduct the work of our Committee. I would also like to take this opportunity to address my congratulations to the members of the Bureau and to wish them every success in their mission.

With the end of the cold war, the danger of States resorting to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has been significantly reduced. There is no longer any justification for the existence of nuclear arsenals or for a security system based on military alliances or on the policies of nuclear deterrence. The current situation is conducive to further efforts by the international community towards nuclear disarmament, in light of the high priority that should be given to this question. My delegation believes that an effort must be made to strengthen peace and security in the post-cold-war period through substantial reductions in nuclear weapons, as the first step towards the final objective of eliminating them. From this perspective, my delegation has welcomed the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, requesting the continuation and completion of negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

The negotiations on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, should receive the international community's priority attention and mobilize it to act. My delegation believes that it is necessary to continue efforts to create a credible control system to cope with the dangers posed by biological weapons. It is up to the United Nations to continue its role in order to develop agreements and the criteria required to deal with these weapons.

Convinced that international cooperation is required in order to rid the world of deadly weapons, last April Bahrain ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

As a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Bahrain believes that Treaty must attain universality without delay or exception. Likewise, my delegation would like to stress the need to assure both the endurance of this Treaty and respect for its provisions so that its objectives, which are the foundation of stability and international peace, can be realized. Security Council resolution 984 (1995) is an initial positive step towards creating a system of security assurances involving all the nuclear-weapon States, even if it provides only limited assurances.

My delegation supports the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We believe that such a session would provide an appropriate structure for disarmament efforts on the eve of the twenty-first century. This session would also give further impetus to efforts in the field of arms limitation and to the devising of confidence-building measures, and it would also allow for the evaluation of the current international situation with regard to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world is one of those steps that can guarantee the non-proliferation of such weapons. It is also a positive step towards the final objective: international nuclear disarmament. And it is one of the means of achieving general and complete disarmament and of protecting States in certain regions from the threat or use of such weapons. This is why Bahrain has supported all the initiatives undertaken in this field, including the idea of creating a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Bahrain is convinced of the need to safeguard peace and stability in the region. This will make it possible for the countries there to avoid the devastating consequences of these weapons and to finance their development projects to improve the standard of living of their peoples. Such efforts will also make a positive contribution to the peace process and strengthen trust and peace at the international and regional levels.

Israel is the only country in that part of the world that is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Israel continues to reject the resolutions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which demand that Israel place its nuclear installations under the Agency's safeguards regime. Israel's accession to the NPT and its respect for IAEA resolutions are essential to the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East. This is essential if we are to create the conditions for just and lasting peace in the region.

Bahrain supports the efforts that have been made to eliminate anti-personnel landmines, since they represent a danger to civilians and impede economic development. Bahrain also supports the efforts to adopt effective measures to put an end to the arbitrary use of anti-personnel landmines. These efforts should aim at the complete elimination of these mines, in view of their disastrous consequences for human beings. That is why we commend all current efforts to achieve this objective, namely to eliminate these arms, and why we also support the important role played by the United Nations in the elimination of landmines and in increasing awareness of the dangers they pose to the peace process.

International cooperation in the field of conventional- and nuclear-weapons limitation will always be the objective of the United Nations and of the international community. This is particularly the case today, when we are living in a world so interdependent in matters of security and economics. We must meet the challenge of our future as human beings in a spirit of cooperation. The United Nations will continue to provide the only framework for the negotiation, dialogue and calm diplomacy that will allow us to resolve our common problems. Hence the need for international cooperation and the need to intensify efforts among States to create a climate of confidence and coordination allowing the United Nations to achieve its ultimate goal: the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Vidaurre (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is a pleasure for me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Your experience will ensure that our proceedings will be skilfully conducted. We wish to assure you and the other members of the Bureau of our full cooperation. We would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Sychou of Belarus, for his work and contribution to the Committee at its last session.

Bolivia endorses the statement made on behalf of the Rio Group last week by the Paraguayan delegation. We wish to emphasize that since the establishment of the Rio Group the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean for the first time have spoken as one in this Committee on a number of matters relating to international peace and security, thereby showing the level of harmonization we have reached.

In addition, we all know that the region of Latin America and the Caribbean has traditionally promoted and supported policies to consolidate world peace, disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, we wish to cite by way of example the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which 30 years ago established a vast nuclear-weapon-free zone. Another more recent initiative is joint action undertaken by the Organization of American States (OAS) to declare the region free from anti-personnel mines.

Bolivia's unswerving position in rejecting arms build-ups leads us to view with concern commercial interests that seek to encourage arming for war, thereby compromising what has been achieved to date to maintain peace and strengthen democracy on our continent, as well as diverting resources that are necessary for the socio-economic development of our peoples.

With a view to strengthening the processes of political and economic integration that are under way, and particularly to contributing to the consolidation of regional stability, we appeal for the existing landmines in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly along shared borders, to be removed, in accordance with the commitments entered into at the Oslo Diplomatic Conference and with the imperative need to promote friendly relations between neighbouring countries.

What clearly stands out in an evaluation of the progress achieved in the field of disarmament during the last year is the adoption in Oslo of the text of the Convention for the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Bolivia is pleased by the conclusion of this treaty and will co-sponsor the draft resolution that invites all States to accede to this important legal instrument. We are also committed to attending the forthcoming meeting in Ottawa in December 1997.

My country welcomes the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) and the establishment of its organization in The Hague. We are also pleased by the impetus gained by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), for the purpose of providing it with verification mechanisms.

With regard to confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels, Bolivia appreciates the function fulfilled by the Register of Conventional Arms, which can be expanded to include light and small arms. We

also welcome any initiative intended to promote transparency in armaments.

Regarding nuclear disarmament, we would like to highlight the large number of countries that have signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the establishment of its Provisional Technical Secretariat. In this context, we welcome the new adherences by States to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), particularly that of Brazil, and we appeal for the universality and full implementation of the Treaty.

With a view to strengthening the non-proliferation regime, we would like to recall the agreements reached in 1995, with the decision on the indefinite extension of the NPT. The principles and objectives identified at that time should serve as orientation for the preparatory work for the Review Conference in the year 2000. A step in this direction was the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee.

We also encourage the direct talks that have been held between the United States and Russia within the context of the START agreements with a view to reducing their nuclear arsenals. We believe that this progress, which is taking place in a favourable climate of profound changes, reaffirms our conviction that the complete and definitive elimination of nuclear weapons from the Earth must be our goal.

Here it is appropriate to recall the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, which sets forth obligations of a legal nature, so that negotiations can be carried out in good faith and concluded, leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.

Bolivia considers that one way to strengthen non-proliferation is through nuclear-weapon-free zones. Therefore, we support the initiative that has been taken to declare the southern hemisphere a broad zone free from such weapons, which in turn will help regions such as the Middle East to join in such arrangements which are freely entered into and internationally recognized.

We support a gradual phased programme of nuclear disarmament, which has been proposed by more than 25 delegations and supported by the Non-Aligned Movement. My country is of the view that it is of the utmost importance to invigorate the Conference on Disarmament in order that it can regain its character as a genuine forum of deliberation and negotiation.

In keeping with the current international situation, and in the hope that a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will allow us to consider questions of nuclear and conventional disarmament, we urge all States to show flexibility so that agreements can be reached on the objectives and the agenda of that session.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that under your wise and able leadership, this Committee will be successfully guided through its challenging agenda. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou of Belarus, for his skilful conduct of the work of the First Committee.

Like many countries, Turkey is committed to the goal of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. This goal should be pursued with realism through a balanced approach encompassing steps relating to both nuclear and conventional arms. Success in disarmament and arms control initiatives depends primarily on the creation of a political atmosphere that inspires confidence. To be effective, any disarmament or arms control measure must provide for undiminished security for the countries concerned without upsetting the global strategic balance. It must provide for adequate and appropriate verification. Greater transparency in defence issues is indispensable in order to avoid uncertainty, misunderstanding and insecurity. Adequate verification and transparency are two fundamental principles of disarmament.

The main focus of this year's agenda has been on anti-personnel landmines. In our view, the multi-dimensional issue of these devices requires consideration of both the humanitarian and disarmament aspects. It is, above all, for humanitarian reasons that on 17 January 1996 Turkey put into effect a renewable three-year moratorium on the export and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, and it is participating in mine-clearance operations in the former Yugoslavia.

The most realistic way to find a solution to the issue of anti-personnel landmines lies in following a phased approach and in targeting a regime that can be effectively implemented, comprising a strong control mechanism and ensuring universality.

We welcome the outcome of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference. The main goal of the Ottawa process is to bring about a universal instrument banning the use of anti-

personnel landmines. The ultimate objective of all States should be to eventually join a total ban. However, statements made by several delegations last week in the Committee have shown that although the process enjoys considerable support among the international community, it falls short of achieving full universality. At present, the land mass which will be left out of the scope of the Ottawa process is about 37.2 million square kilometres. This makes up one fourth of the land mass of the world. We continue to maintain that in order to address the justified security concerns of many States, including those of my own, the objective of a total ban on the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines should be attained in realistically constructed stages. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva would be the most appropriate forum to ensure the attainment of interim and longer-term goals to resolve the anti-personnel landmine problem and to achieve universality.

We recall also that Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects was revised in May 1996; this has defined the permissible scope for the responsible, therefore legitimate, use of anti-personnel landmines. Thus, as a first immediate step, global adherence to the Convention and to its revised Protocol II on anti-personnel landmines should be encouraged.

Last year, Turkey signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on the day it was opened for signature. The CTBT is a very significant instrument for promoting the cause of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We welcome the establishment at Vienna of the CTBT Organization. It is encouraging to see that so far 148 countries, including my own, have signed the Treaty and that seven have ratified it. We attach high importance to the early entry into force of the Treaty. We urge all States which have not yet done so to sign the CTBT, especially those States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to come into force. For its part, Turkey is making the necessary preparations for the submission of the CTBT to the Turkish Parliament for ratification. In order to fulfil its responsibilities under the verification regime, Turkey is also upgrading its infrastructure.

The next logical step after the CTBT should be the early initiation of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, on a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices, known as the cut-off convention.

The first session of the Preparatory Commission for the year 2000 Review Conference of the CTBT, which was held in April this year, was another significant development. We welcome the joint statement made on that occasion by the five nuclear-weapon States, expressing their determination to continue implementing fully all provisions of the Treaty, including those of article VI.

The summit meeting held at Helsinki on 21 March 1997 between the Presidents of the Russian Federation and of the United States made a positive impact on the nuclear disarmament and arms control environment. We also welcome the agreement they reached on this subject, as reiterated when Secretary Albright and Foreign Minister Primakov signed a Treaty Protocol here in New York last month. We hope that this will give the necessary impetus for the ratification of START II and for the negotiations on START III.

The decision of Brazil to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will contribute to achieving the universality of that critical instrument.

We view favourably the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones wherever possible, as a positive step towards attaining the ultimate objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. In this context, we welcome the establishment of such zones through the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones in other parts of the world should be established on the basis of agreements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, including Central Asia, a region with which Turkey enjoys close historical and cultural ties. In this connection, we welcome the results of the International Conference on the theme "Central Asia — Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone", held at Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from 14 to 16 September, where Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan decided to set up a new regime of denuclearization in Central Asia. We hope that the ongoing efforts of the countries of that region will soon bear fruit, contributing not only to regional security cooperation, but also to non-proliferation and disarmament.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction demonstrate the will of

the international community to rid the world of these types of weapons. We attach high significance to the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which Turkey ratified on 12 May 1997. We hope that the Convention will enjoy full universality and compliance in a speedy manner.

We welcome the fact that the ad hoc intergovernmental working group established to negotiate a verification protocol for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention has held two sessions on the basis of a rolling text submitted by its Chairman. We hope that these negotiations will be concluded at an early date, culminating in the adoption of a protocol strengthening the Convention regime and meeting with the satisfaction of all States Parties.

As aptly said by the representative of the United States last week,

> "the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction are far from being extinguished, and the consequences of miscalculation or deliberate acts can be horrific". [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, First Committee*, 4th meeting]

Over the years, Turkey has consistently supported the concept of transparency in the military area. Transparency by itself is a tool for building confidence, which would reduce mistrust among States regionally and internationally. Since its establishment in 1992, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has indeed significantly contributed to efforts to promote openness and transparency in military matters. We share the Secretary-General's observation, as stated in his recent report of 29 August 1997 [A/52/316], that in order for the Register to fulfil its potential, it is highly important not only to increase participation in the Register, but also to expand its scope. We invite all United Nations Members, especially those in our neighbouring Middle East region, to contribute to the desired goal of universality by participating in the Register. It goes without saying that the participation of regional countries will significantly contribute to the achievement of peace, stability and security in the region. I would also like to mention that, at Turkey's initiative, a similar registry system was adopted within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on 16 July 1997.

We have always emphasized the urgent need to develop a more effective safeguards regime. The NPT Review Conference in 1995 provided a good opportunity to review the shortcomings of the existing safeguards and verification systems. The Conference also called for an increase in the capacity of the International Atomic Energy Agency to detect undeclared nuclear activities.

We are pleased that Programme 93+2, which has been under consideration by the competent authorities of the IAEA since 1993, was successfully finalized in June 1997. This programme, which is intended to improve the effectiveness of the safeguards system, minimizes the possibility of a clandestine nuclear weapons programme. We fully support the new Programme measures involving broader access to information, physical access, including no-notice inspections, and the use of environmental sampling methods.

Turkey, flanked by old-technology nuclear reactors of the WWER type on both its east and its west, has long been concerned with nuclear safety issues. We are now satisfied that the Convention on Nuclear Safety, providing a minimum framework for safety commitments, has entered into force and that the first review meeting is scheduled for next year.

Turkey hopes that the Joint Convention relating to radioactive waste and to nuclear liability opened for signature at Vienna in September will enter into force as soon as possible and will constitute a legal framework within which host countries will assume responsibility for their nuclear activities. At the same time, we consider the Joint Convention to be only an incentive instrument. We remain concerned about unresolved issues, particularly those related to the transport of radioactive materials. Turkey believes in the benefits of initiating a separate binding instrument on the safe transport of radioactive materials. Such an instrument would bring about consistent, multimodal and binding measures for safe transport.

The spread of weapons of mass destruction, and especially of systems for the delivery of such weapons, is a cause for deep concern for the international community, and of course for my country. Turkey attaches the highest priority to efforts aimed at preventing the proliferation of such weapons and of their delivery systems. In this context, Turkey joined the Missile Technology Control Regime on 25 April 1997. We intend to participate very actively in the work of the Regime.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is a cornerstone of the European security structure. The agreement on the Treaty's flank issues, reached in 1996 following long negotiations, came into force on 15 May 1997. There is general agreement on the adaption of the

Treaty to the favourable changes in the political and security field in Europe since the period in which the Treaty was originally signed. It is therefore encouraging to note that the discussions being held at Vienna on a framework agreement concerning certain principal elements of adaptation were concluded on 23 July of this year.

In conclusion, I would also like to touch upon the relevance of the important United Nations reform process to the activities of the Organization in the disarmament area. This requires a good evaluation of the present structure and of ways and means to enhance the effectiveness of the work being carried out, especially within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament. We will continue to contribute to the efforts expended in that direction.

Mr. Kim (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Mr. Chairman, please allow me at the outset to express to you, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, our congratulations on your election as Chairman of this important Committee. I am confident that with your diplomatic skills and rich experience you will guide the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion. I assure you that my delegation will cooperate actively with you and the other officers of the Committee and with other delegations.

The Committee is meeting amid the ever-high voices for comprehensive and complete disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament. An overwhelming majority of Member States, including developing countries, are much concerned about nuclear testing, which has continued even after the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and about the qualitative improvement and modernization of nuclear arsenals. They are demanding that nuclear weapons be completely abolished on the Earth as soon as possible.

As all countries have already recognized, the very existence of nuclear weapons poses a continued threat to world peace and security. Yet the nuclear-weapon States have not discarded the outdated doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Instead, they are trying to legitimize the existence and the use of nuclear weapons. They are not even willing to express a readiness to eliminate nuclear weapons on a phased basis. The attempt to maintain nuclear arsenals and produce new types of nuclear weapons while speaking loudly about nuclear deterrence can no longer be legitimized now that the cold war has ended.

My delegation is of the view that nuclear disarmament should be given priority in overall disarmament and that it should aim at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. With that understanding in mind, my delegation supports the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, at which nuclear disarmament could be discussed as a main agenda item.

The nuclear-weapon States should stop completely the testing and production of nuclear weapons and give full assurances to the non-nuclear-weapon States of the non-use of their nuclear weapons under any circumstances. For the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, some kind of binding international agreement is needed.

My delegation wishes to join the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and other non-nuclear-weapon States in urging the nuclear-weapon States to enter into international negotiations for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We believe that the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons that was submitted by the delegations of 28 non-aligned countries, including my own, to the Conference on Disarmament in August last year could be the basis of nuclear negotiations.

Regional peace and security play an important role in ensuring international security. There are signs of trends towards détente and cooperation in several places in the world following the end of the cold war. Yet in the north-east Asian region, and in particular on the Korean peninsula, the legacy of the cold war remains intact and the unstable situation continues. This is very closely related to the military collusion and arms race of outside forces. Military conspiracy between the United States and Japan and the United States and South Korea is stronger than ever before, and large-scale joint military exercises are frequently conducted in the region.

In recent years, South Korea has introduced up-to-date military equipment on a large scale. South Korea has contracted with the United States to buy over $3 billion worth of AWACS, the most sophisticated airborne warning and control system, and $370 million in "Stinger" missiles. South Korea has another contract to buy missiles from France. In this connection, my delegation wishes to draw the attention of the international community to the fact that the scramble for the South Korean arms market by the big Powers, who are so eager to express their concern over the situation on the Korean peninsula, is jeopardizing the peninsula's peace and security. We call upon truly peace-loving countries to be vigilant with regard to the inconsistent acts of the big Powers who are claiming to be

the guardians of peace and security, on the one hand, and on the other are making money through the arms trade.

The situation prevailing on the Korean peninsula requires the establishment of a peace arrangement at an early date. The maintenance of peace and security on the Korean peninsula is linked to peace in north-east Asia and in the rest of the world as well. A lasting peace cannot be achieved with the present armistice system, which is neither war nor peace.

We have already proposed establishing a peace mechanism to replace the old armistice system, and in February of last year we again made an extended proposal to replace the Armistice Agreement with an interim agreement to prevent possible military confrontation in the Demilitarized Zone. Our proposal for an interim agreement is a just and reasonable one, which takes into consideration the current policy of the United States with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the present situation on the Korean peninsula, which seems to be fraught with the unexpected. Our proposals are the reflection of our peace-loving attempts to avert another war, preserve a lasting peace in Korea and maintain the peace and security of north-east Asia as well.

When the United States wanted to start the peace process in the Korean peninsula by proposing four-party talks, we expressed our readiness to hold such talks and attended two rounds of preliminary talks in New York. Since the objective of those four-party talks is to preserve peace on the Korean peninsula, questions relating to the conclusion of a peace agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States and the pull-out of United States troops should be the top agenda items. The withdrawal of United States troops from South Korea is essential for eradicating the very roots of a new war on the Korean peninsula and laying the firm foundation for a lasting peace in north-east Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.

The "United Nations Command" in South Korea remains a stumbling block to bringing about a peace arrangement in the Korean peninsula. The "United Nations forces" in South Korea are United States forces and the "United Nations Command" is the United States command. The United Nations is therefore urged to pay due attention to the realization of resolution 3390 B (XXX), adopted at the thirtieth session of the General Assembly — which called for the dissolution of the "United Nations Command" in South Korea, and for the replacement of the Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement — and at least withdraw its name and flag from the United States troops in South Korea. Should the foreign forces withdraw and a new peace mechanism be established in the Korean peninsula, other issues could be resolved between the North and the South of Korea, by ourselves.

The Korean people can realize the reunification of the country by themselves. We have the three-point principles of independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity, agreed upon by the North and the South and recognized by the international community. We also have a proposal for federal reunification, based on the concept of one nation, one State, two systems and two Governments, as well as the 10-Point Programme of Great Unity of the Whole Nation, set forth by our great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung, and embodying the three-point principles for reunification of the fatherland. The confederal reunification proposal is a reasonable approach to realizing the country's reunification by recognizing the different ideologies and systems that have existed in the North and the South for more than half a century since the division of my country was enforced by outside forces, and promoting national reconciliation based on the principle of neither conquering nor being conquered.

The present reality, in which Hong Kong maintains its capitalist system even after its return to the mainland People's Republic of China, clearly demonstrates that differing ideologies and systems are no longer obstacles in the way of forming a unified State and that national unity can surely be achieved by transcending the difference of systems in one country. This proves once again the justness of our confederal reunification policy. Should confederal reunification be achieved, the arms race in the Korean peninsula and the potential military conflicts between North and South would ultimately disappear, thus turning the entire territory of the Korean peninsula, including the demilitarized zone along the Military Demarcation Line, into a peace and buffer zone.

The Government of our Republic will spare no effort towards the establishment of a new peace mechanism in the Korean peninsula and the realization of the country's confederal reunification, thus making a due contribution to the peace and security of north-east Asia, and the world.

The principal ideals of the foreign policy of the Government of our Republic are independence, peace and friendship.

My delegation will discharge its international duties in the struggle for a new peaceful and independent world, free

of nuclear weapons. It expresses the hope that this Committee will successfully discuss all agenda items, including those on nuclear disarmament issues, and thus make a practical contribution to international peace and security.

Mr. Sheikh (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, upon your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I wish you and the other members of the Bureau all success. I am sure your talents and your efforts will guide our proceedings to a successful culmination.

After a period of stagnation in disarmament efforts, we are now discussing disarmament problems and international security against a backdrop of a number of developments in disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, represented by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its indefinite extension, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the creation of a number of nuclear-weapon-free zones, and lastly the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*.

While these developments are important, they should not lead us to excessive optimism. The danger of nuclear weapons hovering over mankind has yet to be eliminated or reduced to any degree. There is no reason to believe that the necessity for redoubling our efforts to ensure disarmament has lessened. The challenges facing international security are still great, because the manufacturing, stockpiling, distribution and testing of nuclear weapons proceed apace, and nuclear weapons and their missiles in the arsenals of nuclear-weapon States still terrorize mankind.

Nuclear disarmament remains a problem, as is the refusal of nuclear-weapon States to enter into agreements that would lead to the total elimination of such weapons. In addition to these dangers, the policies which are founded upon power and interference in the internal affairs of others, as well as hegemony, economic blockades and economic coercion, that have been imposed by certain Powers against some developing countries still exist. All of these challenges are undoubtedly serious threats to international security and indeed the very survival of mankind itself. If we do not address these problems with due seriousness, our firm commitment to sparing our peoples the scourge of war and to securing for them a world in which security and peace prevail will be debilitated.

In light of this alarming reality, it seems that the most pressing problem in disarmament is to free mankind from the terror for which nuclear weapons stand and which has weighed on us since they entered the international arena. Thus it appears to us that the international community has a well-defined undertaking: to focus our efforts on nuclear disarmament, which should be the top priority in our scale of priorities.

Nuclear-weapon States must show the necessary will to create a nuclear-weapon-free world and initiate negotiations with a view to entirely eliminating nuclear weapons under a programme of scheduled phases within a carefully defined framework. We find that the proposals on nuclear disarmament put forward by the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament reflect a pragmatic approach based on measures to be taken within a defined context that could eventually lead to full and comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

In this regard, we are deeply concerned because the Conference on Disarmament's report was very disappointing this year. Lacking consensus, it was unable to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament mandated to initiate negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

My country, like all others in the international community, appreciates the progress that has been made to date in nuclear disarmament, but must take into consideration the potential impact of that progress on general and comprehensive disarmament under effective international control. We had hoped that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) would constitute a step forward in our efforts to achieve full and complete disarmament, but we have been disappointed by its content, which was not commensurate with the hopes that all peoples had placed in nuclear disarmament. There are gaps in it, since the technically advanced countries can still improve their nuclear arsenals by means of laboratory experiments. The Treaty does not deal with the question of nuclear disarmament, which will allow the status quo to be preserved. Such an imbalanced treaty can in no way be deemed to be complete.

In view of these facts, my delegation iterated its position at the time of the Treaty's adoption. With all the Treaty's lacunae, that adoption gave us no satisfaction. Past experience has taught us all that nuclear tests are not the only way to develop nuclear capacity. No one today can claim that partial measures suffice to halt the arms race or to slow the qualitative or quantitative development of nuclear weapons. Documents adopted in the past have not

led to progress in nuclear disarmament, in halting the production of nuclear weapons or in reducing the huge and increasingly sophisticated arsenals.

We believe that the CTBT must lead to the adoption of additional disarmament measures, which have been awaited far too long. The non-nuclear-weapon States must be given security guarantees to ensure that such weapons will not be used against them. This could be provided by means of a binding international treaty entered into by the nuclear-weapon States, but there is no optimism in this regard because those States are continuing to hedge. They are using delaying tactics despite the various resolutions that have been adopted in the General Assembly and the talks taking place in the Conference on Disarmament on a binding international treaty to provide security guarantees to those countries that have decided to renounce the nuclear option.

Some say that a unilateral declaration would suffice in place of such a guarantee. It would not ensure, however, that nuclear-weapon States would commit themselves to such guarantees. Some nuclear-weapon States persist in keeping their nuclear weapons and insist that it is only to preserve their own integrity and security and those of their allies. We cannot understand the reasoning behind such conduct, unless it is simply that those States wish to dominate the world and keep those weapons in order to pursue their political and economic objectives. But the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons* holds that such measures run counter to international law. That provides a legal basis for pursuing the nuclear disarmament process.

With regard to discarding the nuclear option, we have the example of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, notably in Latin America, the South Pacific, South-East Asia and Africa. My country supports the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and signed a regional treaty in that regard. Tel Aviv's possession of nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction and missiles has cast the Middle East into a shadowy place at a great remove from the ideal of nuclear-weapon-free zones. That part of the world is threatened by instability and nuclear weapons. The fact that Tel Aviv has taken that option and is terrorizing the countries of the region, as well as its refusal to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to heed the appeals of the international community to renounce its nuclear weapons, is underpinned by the technical support of States that claim to be concerned with international opinion. Weapons are destroyed on a selective basis, without affording the Islamic or Arab States of the third world the opportunity to guarantee their own security.

One must wonder why this is so. This imbalanced situation will surely affect the countries of the world and international security. It will also impede the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

In the light of these developments in the field of disarmament, the holding of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament seems to us a very wise idea, as it would make it possible to review the disarmament agenda and define ways to achieve the objectives of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. As far as we are concerned, that document provides an essential foundation for disarmament.

The establishment of zones of peace throughout the world would be one way to enhance peace and security at the regional and international levels. This is why my country, which borders the Mediterranean, attaches the highest importance to enhancing security in that region, with a view to ensuring that it becomes a sea of peace and cooperation among the coastal States. The only problem is the existence of military bases and foreign fleets, as well as weapons of mass destruction. These are a source of instability and danger and seriously impede the strengthening of peace in the region. There is no doubt that it will not be possible to strengthen peace and stability in that region if the military bases, foreign fleets and weapons of mass destruction are not removed from the area.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would first like to say what a pleasure it is to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I would also like to congratulate the members of the Bureau on their elections, as well as to express the confidence of my delegation that your experience and talent will ensure a positive outcome to the work of the Committee, as this is the goal of the entire international community in the field of disarmament. I would once again like to reiterate my delegation's support and its readiness to cooperate fully with you in order to achieve that goal. I also take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou, for the excellent way in which he conducted the work of the Committee during the previous session.

Everyone agrees that, with the end of the cold war, there is no longer any justification for the presence of nuclear arsenals or a security system based on competing military alliances or policies of nuclear deterrence. Nevertheless, we have unfortunately noticed a justification lacking any seriousness for the nuclear option, derived from the insistence of countries which possess nuclear weapons on acquiring numerous nuclear weapons under the pretext of nuclear security. The reason given is sometimes the unstable international situation, and sometimes the need to update these weapons in order to make them technologically useable.

We believe that in the final analysis all these false pretexts are aimed at securing a monopoly of nuclear weapons, to restrict them to the members of the nuclear club and then grant them to other countries outside the nuclear club. By acquiring nuclear weapons, these countries obviously represent a threat to regional and international stability and an incitement to an arms race.

My delegation would also like to reiterate its support for the call of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement at the Conference on Disarmament for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on disarmament matters. This is an essential element in beginning negotiations on a phased programme of total nuclear disarmament within a specified time-frame, as well as an international treaty on nuclear weapons. Such an instrument should be binding on all and should be complied with by all States, without exception, in order to bring about total nuclear disarmament.

In this connection, my delegation would like to support the holding of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament as promptly as possible.

We also place great hope in the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) within the context of initiatives to strengthen the review process in order to guarantee the achievement of the objectives of the Treaty's preamble and provisions. This would promote the observance of the obligations identified during the Conference of the Parties to the NPT in 1995, especially as this Treaty is an essential instrument to put an end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, both horizontally and vertically. It is also a necessary element in striking a fair balance with respect to the various obligations and responsibilities between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States, in order to bring about the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

In this connection, we would once again recall the importance of achieving the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and of concluding legally binding international agreements that will assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

It was clear to the initial signatories of the NPT — including my country, Syria — that it was not an end in itself, as was clearly pointed out by U Thant, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations. On the contrary, it was a step towards limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons in order to pave the way for the adoption of effective measures to achieve complete disarmament, as stipulated in the preamble and in article VI of the Treaty.

In common with most of the non-nuclear-weapon States, we acceded to the Treaty in spite of its shortcomings, in the hope of effectively limiting the dangers inherent in the proliferation of nuclear arms, and in order to achieve their complete elimination and to obtain the technical assistance which the nuclear States parties to the Treaty undertook to provide with respect to the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

However, certain nuclear-weapon States have impeded the transfer of technology for peaceful purposes to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty, which are obliged to respect its provisions. At the same time, they have accepted, overtly and covertly, the fact that certain advanced technology has been given to Israel, which has always refused to accede to the NPT. This has enabled Israel to achieve a military nuclear capacity, which is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Treaty. We therefore believe that the international community should establish a mechanism that will allow for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, put an end to their manufacture and liquidate the vast stocks in every country of the world in which they exist, without exception. Such a measure would be facilitated by the fact that the cold war has ended, an important and encouraging factor in this regard.

Syria is profoundly convinced that the NPT will not be able to achieve the objectives that we seek unless all the countries in the world accede to it without exception, both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. The credibility of this Treaty and the achievement of its objectives are conditional on its universality. This is true at the international as well as at the regional level.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world is also a positive step towards bringing

about a world free of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. My country supports and welcomes the declarations establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. Unfortunately, there is no such zone in the Middle East, the region in which my country is located, because of Israel's refusal to help in any way to achieve that objective. Israel is the only country in the region that has refused to accede to the NPT and to the safeguards system, contrary to the actions of other countries in the region whose aim is to ensure that the Middle East becomes a region free from any kind of weapon of mass destruction.

During the Paris Conference in 1989, Syria put forward an initiative to make the Middle East a region free from any weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical or biological — within the framework of the United Nations system. However, Israel ignored these initiatives, as well as those of the United Nations, the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the appeals made at various summit meetings of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Israel's possession of chemical weapons in our very sensitive region will always be a source of anxiety and grave danger, not only for the people of that region, but for the whole world.

We should like to take this opportunity to reiterate our appeal to the international community to call on Israel to accede to the NPT and to submit its sites and its nuclear activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system so that the region of the Middle East can finally be freed from all nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. Israel's current position on this question, and all the justifications that it uses, clearly run counter to its claimed desire for peace in the region. We believe that true peace can be built only by translating good intentions into concrete action and restoring rights to those who have been deprived of them, not by possessing nuclear weapons or threatening to use them, or through the imposition of hegemony or military superiority.

In this respect, I wonder how we can ask a country with no nuclear weapons whatsoever to give assurances to a country that possesses the largest nuclear arsenal. How can we expect the countries in a given region to commit themselves to giving up the possession, production and acquisition of nuclear weapons when just one country in this region is exempt from such obligations — especially when we are sure that that country has an arsenal of hundreds of nuclear bombs and missiles, and is not subject to any form of international surveillance or inspection?

The dangerous and deteriorating nature of this situation is evident given that the country in question occupies part of the territories of its neighbours, in defiance of legitimate international resolutions. Furthermore, it possesses and manufactures different types of the most up-to-date weapons, in particular weapons of mass destruction. It launches satellites and flaunts its capacity to spy on the States of the region. Despite all this, it claims that its peace is threatened and demands favours and advantages that are to the detriment of the peace of its neighbours.

Syria firmly believes that transparency in matters of armaments is a means of strengthening international peace and security. We reaffirm our support for the response given by members of the League of Arab States to the Secretary-General of the United Nations with regard to transparency in armaments. In this respect, in its present state the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms lacks transparency. It should be expanded so as to include information about weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, and advanced technology with military applications. We add to that the need to provide detailed reports on the manufacture of weapons on a national scale. The choice of seven categories of defensive weapons does not convince all countries, and can only conceal a discriminatory approach. It falls to take account of the situation in the Middle East, which is characterized by a qualitative lack of balance in the field of armaments.

Syria is aware of its responsibilities with regard to regional security as well as to international peace and security. We are firmly committed to a just and lasting peace in the region. We aspire to a planet Earth that, in the near future, will be free from war and all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons — one that will make it possible for all peoples to live together in peace and to dedicate themselves to the achievement of development, progress and prosperity.

Ms. Flórez (Cuba) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the delegation of Cuba and on my own behalf, may I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. You can count on our complete support in the fulfilment of your task. I would also like to extend our thanks to the other officers of the Committee.

A realistic analysis could not fail to prove the existence of unjustified and dangerous inconsistencies in the implementation of measures aimed at realizing the goals and priorities defined by the United Nations in the field of disarmament and international security.

If the rivalry between the major powers and the arms race have already disappeared, why do certain countries openly oppose the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons? Is it that the top priority given to nuclear disarmament since 1978 is no longer valid? In my delegation's opinion, the pretexts of certain countries that try to deny the anachronism of military doctrines that justify the existence and accumulation of nuclear weapons are absolutely unacceptable. That is why last year Cuba co-sponsored resolution 51/45 O on nuclear disarmament, and why we reiterate the need for the establishment, as a priority, of an ad hoc committee on this subject at the Conference on Disarmament, so that multilateral negotiations on a phased disarmament programme can be started immediately.

In that context, the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, presented by 28 delegations, including Cuba, at the Conference on Disarmament in August last year must be duly taken into account. On the other hand, until the goal of nuclear disarmament is finally reached, it will be necessary to urgently adopt a multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory juridical instrument of negative security assurances. Such an instrument must establish express obligations of nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, (CWC), whose States parties include Cuba, and the formal establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) clearly constitute two events of particular significance since the last session of the First Committee. But they were only the beginning of the process leading to the total elimination of these weapons of mass destruction. Effective implementation of the Convention requires the urgent solution of every substantive question still pending in the framework of the OPCW, particularly those stemming directly from that international legal instrument and from the Paris resolution.

Among these pending questions, those relating to the implementation of article XI of the Convention are of particular interest to Cuba. It is simply unacceptable that certain countries seek to minimize the importance of this article, involving economic and technological development, whose provisions have a particularly significant impact on developing countries.

On depositing its instrument of ratification of the Convention, the Government of Cuba made a statement declining any responsibility as to whether or not chemical weapons were situated in the Guantanamo naval base, over which it has no jurisdiction. Such responsibility belongs to the Government of the United States of America as the Power illegally occupying the part of Cuban territory where the base is located.

Likewise, Cuba stated that under the provisions of article XI the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States Government against Cuba was incompatible with the objectives and purposes of that juridical instrument. In this regard, I should like to reiterate that, should this situation continue Cuba reserves its right, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, to bring the case to the relevant authorities of the OPCW.

My country actively participated in the work of the Fourth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, and believes that the principles contained in its Final Declaration should be used as a basis for continuing to reinforce the Convention in the future. The progress made by the Ad Hoc Group established by the 1994 special Conference to examine appropriate measures, including possible verification measures, to strengthen the Convention, is increasingly evident. Cuba will continue to present concrete proposals within that Group, thereby ensuring complete fulfilment of its mandate in the shortest possible time.

From 25 to 27 August last Geneva hosted, for the first time ever, an official consultative meeting of the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. That meeting was requested by Cuba under article V of that Convention, for the purpose of presenting extensive evidence supporting my country's suspicion concerning non-compliance with the provisions of the Convention by a State party. The vast amount of information presented by Cuba at the consultative meeting highlighted the coincidence in terms of time and space between the appearance in my country of the *Thrips palmi* plague and the spraying of unknown substances by a United States S2R-type aircraft as it passed over Cuban territory on 21 October 1996.

Cuba will continue to participate, in good faith, in the current process agreed by the consultative meeting with the aim of clarifying the facts. We hope the findings will for the first time demonstrate in practical terms how effective these consultative meetings are. This procedure was adopted by the States parties to the Biological Weapons

Convention in order to ensure full implementation of its article V, on consultation and cooperation.

May I now make some brief remarks on the question of anti-personnel landmines — a problem that is currently drawing so much attention.

Cuba fully shares the concern voiced by the vast majority of the international community on the dire consequences for the civilian population in many parts of the world of the indiscriminate and irrational use of anti-personnel landmines. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the fact that these weapons are used by many States for legitimate defence purposes. Therefore, an effective solution to the problem of anti-personnel mines requires a proper balance between humanitarian concerns and the genuine national security interests of States.

A treaty totally prohibiting anti-personnel mines in the current conditions would not take into account such a balance. Cuba therefore has serious difficulties in supporting it. Cuban military doctrine foresees only the defensive use of mines, in the event of an imminent threat or of foreign aggression.

At present, Cuba uses mines only to protect the perimeter of the Guantanamo naval base, which is Cuban territory illegally occupied by the United States of America. Once that country withdraws its forces and equipment from that territory and returns it to its legitimate owner, Cuba will immediately remove the mines installed in the area.

The amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects provides the best possible common ground for reducing or eliminating risks to civilians and non-combatants, both from the countries that use mines and from those that have renounced their use. Thus, the priority task should be to achieve universal accession to the amended Protocol II. To ignore this step forward and try to force the adoption of an apparently quick solution, such as a total, immediate prohibition, without the participation of key actors could have a serious negative impact on the international community.

In spite of the efforts made by a great number of countries, the ongoing delaying manoeuvres carried out in a particularly intense manner by a nuclear Power are creating uncertainty about the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Both from its national perspective and in its capacity as a State member of the group of non-aligned countries, Cuba has insisted on the importance of the special session taking place as soon as possible, in the year 2000 at the latest. That great conclave will make it possible to design the future course of action in the field of disarmament and international security and give logical continuity to the implementation of the concepts, principles and basic priorities in this field, adopted by the international community in 1978.

Finally, I would like to announce that this year the First Committee must once again take a decision on a draft resolution entitled "Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control", similar to those submitted at the last two sessions by the group of non-aligned countries. The importance the international community attaches to this subject is reflected in the strong support that the draft resolution has been receiving. We hope that this year the positive balance will remain and even grow.

Mr. Chairman, I reiterate my delegation's complete readiness to do all it can to help you carry out your tasks and thus to contribute to the success of our work.

Mr. Jabir (United Republic of Tanzania): Mr. Chairman, I join previous speakers in congratulating you and your Bureau on your deserved elections to steer the deliberations of this year's session of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that under your able leadership the Committee will make great progress on the important issues on its agenda.

In recent years we have witnessed progress in the fields of non-proliferation and disarmament. We welcome the progress recently made by the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, banning a whole category of weapons of mass destruction, the development at Oslo of the text of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and the ongoing efforts to strengthen the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We note also that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been adopted.

Also praiseworthy among the progress made is the emergence and consolidation of the nuclear-weapon-free zones established through the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and, most recently, Bangkok. We call upon the nuclear-weapon States to accede to the protocols of the Bangkok Treaty soon. We also hope that current efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions, including Central Asia, will make significant headway.

Despite progress in some areas of disarmament, we regret that a lot remains to be done to achieve general and complete disarmament. The meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Non-Aligned Movement held at New Delhi, India, in April 1997 and during the current session of the General Assembly at New York in September 1997 called for the conclusion of a universal, legally binding multilateral agreement committing all States to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This would accomplish our goal of complete and general disarmament.

Tanzania attaches great importance to the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. Regrettably, some major permanent members of the Security Council and some major maritime users have not been participating in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. We are concerned that this has some serious implications in the region. We call upon all concerned, especially the super-Powers and the major maritime users, to cooperate and support our endeavour to establish a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean.

The adoption of the CTBT last year was an important event. Unfortunately, the Treaty lacks an explicit commitment to the definite end of the nuclear arms race. Despite its name, the CTBT is far from being comprehensive, because it allows nuclear-weapon States to use their already advanced technology to modernize and upgrade their nuclear-weapon systems through laboratory simulations. It is regrettable that in the less than one year of the CTBT's existence, one nuclear-weapon State has recently announced its plans to conduct a series of sub-critical underground nuclear tests.

Tanzania is of the view that the Conference on Disarmament should start negotiations leading to an agreement prohibiting the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. Cut-off negotiations would be in line with the principles and objectives agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT. We believe that a cut-off agreement is necessary to reduce the availability of fissile materials.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) constitute evidence of a new era in breaking new ground in the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Successful implementation of the Convention will be vital in the further development and strengthening of a new, broader international regime. We commend the 100 countries that have become parties to the Treaty. Tanzania has already set in motion the process of ratification of the Treaty. We are convinced that universal adherence is a prerequisite for the full realization and implementation of the Convention's objectives. We also call on all States parties to faithfully fulfil their obligations as stipulated in the Convention. It is therefore vital to support the activities of the OPCW.

While we note that some progress has been made in the areas of chemical and biological weapons, nuclear weapons remain an important feature of the military postures of nuclear-weapon States. We commend the bilateral efforts between the Russian Federation and the United States and their success so far through START I and START II, which are intended to reduce the size of their nuclear arsenals. While commending their efforts, we are of the view that such bilateral processes are prone to fragility, the more so because of the prevailing political environment. We believe that such efforts need to be based on a time-bound framework which would lead to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

Tanzania wishes to reiterate its support for efforts to strengthen the safeguards arrangements of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We appreciate the Agency's invaluable contribution to our country's efforts in promoting nuclear technology for peaceful uses, specifically in industry, agriculture and health.

Tanzania is disappointed at the failure of the Conference on Disarmament to agree on its programme of work for its 1997 session. It even failed to make any progress on the negotiations. It is evident that the existing impasse in the Conference is a reflection of the differences in positions and approaches to the substantive aspects of the work of the Conference.

The prevailing paralysis of that body will not only undermine its relevance and usefulness as the sole multilateral negotiating mechanism on disarmament but would also ultimately increase the risk of its being sidelined. We appeal therefore for greater efforts to be exerted so as to enable the work of the Conference on

Disarmament and related negotiations to proceed without delay.

Another destabilizing threat to global peace and security is the proliferation of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons. We are particularly concerned at the continuing transfer of small arms and light weapons, especially where illicit trade in such weapons leads to their falling into the hands of anti-social elements. This increases violence and terrorism. It is in this regard that Tanzania shares the view that the international community should focus its attention on greater transparency and accountability in the manufacture and transfer of conventional weapons, which could help eliminate this menace.

The issue of landmines has, through the Ottawa process, attracted international attention because of the immense, horrific sufferings they have caused to the civilian population, mainly women and children. In principle, Tanzania supports a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, as negotiated through the Ottawa process. But we are of the view that the Convention on anti-personnel landmines should not be treated independently of other processes that are targeted at the elimination of all types of weapons of mass destruction.

Rather, the question of anti-personnel landmines should be approached in a holistic manner. We reiterate our hope that the elimination of anti-personnel landmines will not be regarded as an end in itself but as part of a comprehensive framework addressing all aspects of the problem, including those of the producers of those weapons and the underlying political conflicts of interest these weapons serve and sustain.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the early convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We believe that SSOD IV is the appropriate forum for reflection on issues such as disarmament and arms control as well as other issues related to security. We hope the United Nations will use this platform to reassert itself in its role in enhancing non-proliferation and disarmament issues for the next millennium.

In conclusion, we hope that the ongoing reforms, namely the upgrading of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs to the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, would increase the capacity to implement priorities and mandates agreed upon. We believe the reforms anticipated would enhance mutual trust so that we could work towards complete and general disarmament.

Ms. Eshmambetova (Kyrgyzstan): My delegation wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this important Committee, whose work should assist the States of this body in creating a safer and more stable world. We look forward to providing you with our full support and cooperation during the deliberations of the fifty-second session.

My delegation welcomes the step-by-step progress of international efforts in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We would like to recognize in particular the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the ratification by the United States of the START II Treaty, and the recent Oslo Conference in the area of anti-personnel landmines. Evidence of additional progress can be seen in the decisions of the United States, France and the United Kingdom to adopt the Protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga; in the collective work of the States of Africa in agreeing to the Treaty of Pelindaba; and in the recent entry into force of the Treaty of Bangkok.

Although further negotiations still lie ahead in some areas, it is gratifying to see States making substantive efforts to overcome their differences and to work out collectively acceptable solutions for the common benefit of their regions and of humankind. These achievements mark considerable steps forward towards the realization of the principles and objectives adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

While certain international efforts — such as a fissile material cut-off treaty and the ratification and implementation of the CTBT — depend on broad international cooperation, the trend towards nuclear-weapon-free zones in recent years is evidence of the significance of regional movements in advancing the cause of global non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. These zones now cover nearly the whole of the Southern Hemisphere, in addition to Antarctica, the seabed and outer space. Kyrgyzstan supports the gradual expansion of these zones, as reflected in our delegation's sponsorship of several United Nations documents since 1995, including a draft resolution submitted last year in the First Committee calling for a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone. Our delegation also supports the development of new concepts for States whose geographical circumstances make it difficult for them to join existing or prospective nuclear-

weapon-free zones. We wish to recognize in this regard Mongolia's initiative promoting the recognition of "single-State" nuclear-weapon-free zones.

In the past year, the States of Central Asia have made considerable progress in their collective efforts to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in our region. This work has included the five-State Almaty Declaration in February 1997, the working paper submitted in 1997 to the NPT Preparatory Committee, and the five-State ministerial statement released jointly in Tashkent this September expressing our commitment to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. The Kyrgyz Government firmly supports these efforts and requests United Nations assistance in the convening of an "experts' meeting" in our capital, Bishkek, in 1998, so that the freely acting States of our region, with the participation of experts from the five permanent members of the Security Council and other interested States, can begin the serious work of elaborating the details of the proposed zone.

Our Government would like to express its sincere thanks and gratitude for the support already voiced for the proposed Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone by a number of States, including Algeria, Australia, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, Mongolia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Thailand, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement and many others.

As our country looks to the future, it recognizes that despite these accomplishments, much work remains to be done in order to build a safer and more secure world. Recent efforts to limit or ban certain classes of weapons deserve our attention, including the proposed elimination of tactical nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and anti-personnel landmines. In this regard, our delegation commends the work of the Oslo Conference to stimulate international cooperation on the landmine issue and to promote the cleanup of existing mines. The continued presence of large numbers of anti-personnel landmines plagues the cause of peace-building in many regions. Their terrible effects in zones of conflict, even after the cessation of hostilities, prevents the return of refugees and the reconstruction of national economies. In these and other regions, countries often unfairly bear the burden of cleaning up mines left over by other States. My delegation encourages the States of the Ottawa process to consider particularly the difficulties facing developing or newly independent States that wish to support efforts to demine and to ban the use of landmines but will need financial assistance in order to do so.

Another area of concern to the Kyrgyz Government is the continued illicit cross-border trade in small arms. Although not as powerful as nuclear weapons, these arms are even more deadly. Recent statistics have shown that small arms are responsible for the vast majority of casualties in conflict areas around the world. With the increasing sophistication of international smugglers, individual States often find themselves incapable of halting the flow of these weapons without significant international cooperation. In this regard, the Kyrgyz Government welcomes efforts by States to stem the tide of this trade, to expand the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and to monitor and reduce the production of small arms around the world.

Finally, our delegation wishes to encourage other international efforts to promote disarmament and non-proliferation. These involve measures that aim not only at reducing the consequences of possible armed conflicts, but at rendering such conflicts themselves less likely. Our Government, together with China, Kazakhstan, Russia and Tajikistan, signed a unique border agreement this year that mandates the removal of all heavy weapons within a 100-kilometre border zone. This initiative is bolstered by other joint agreements that encourage transparency in armaments in the border region and forewarning of movements of troops or the conduct of military exercises. Similar efforts in other parts of the world to build regional cooperation and transparency would be welcomed by our Government.

Our delegation looks forward to the serious and important work of this Committee to continue our collective progress in creating and strengthening the conditions for peace at the national, regional and international levels. The Kyrgyz Government continues to support initiatives that will reduce the future need for States to spend large amounts of their scarce national resources on weapons. It looks forward to a time when States can reapportion these funds to peaceful purposes, such as national economic development. Much work still needs to be done, but our country is prepared to cooperate with other States in the elaboration of practical measures to achieve such objectives.

Mr. Al-Saeid (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee for this session. We are quite certain that thanks to your wisdom and personal experience our work will be crowned with success. Likewise, I extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. I would like to wish them every possible success in their work.

The rapid changes that the international community has undergone, with its increasing interdependence, reaffirm the need to strengthen cooperation and solidarity in international relations, because world peace is indivisible, and the path of peace is the only one that will lead the international community to security, given the circumstances and challenges it now confronts. The end of the cold war has reaffirmed beyond a doubt that cooperation and international solidarity are the only means of deterring actions that risk threatening international peace and security. It is in disarmament that international cooperation will find its finest expression.

The proliferation of conventional weapons and the pronounced tendency of States to stockpile them and to reinforce their military arsenals are sources of deep concern. Serious international cooperation is required so that we can take steps to curb these trends in the interest of peace and international security, and in order to strengthen trust between peoples and States. Perhaps the most important initiative to take is to encourage and support the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms so that it may be an instrument to reduce military expenditure and enable the resulting savings to be used to support development projects in the developing countries.

We are very interested in the problem of anti-personnel landmines, whose consequences are not confined to armies in wartime, but extend much further, threatening the peace and security of peoples throughout the world. Our people in Kuwait are still suffering from the tremendous number of mines planted by the Iraqi regime during its invasion of Kuwait. We frequently hear of accidents caused by these mines, whose victims are always innocent people. That is why my delegation supports all international efforts to curb the production and export of these weapons and to impose upon States that violate the regulations full responsibility for the consequences of these mines. That is why we welcomed the results of the Diplomatic Conference that concluded the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, held in Oslo, Norway, in September 1997. We look forward to the conference to take place in Ottawa in December 1997 for the signing of the Convention, which we hope will enter into force as soon as possible.

Concluding a convention totally banning nuclear tests is the principal step towards achieving one of the international community's disarmament priorities. It is also a reaffirmation of the commitments the international community made regarding the objectives defined in the document on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and disarmament adopted on 11 May 1995, at the conclusion of the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. As one of the parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Kuwait urges that this Treaty enter into force as quickly as possible, and that nothing be done to contravene its spirit and letter.

The creation of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone, sought by all the Arab States, has been substantially impeded by Israel's refusal to respond to the wishes expressed by the countries in the region and the international community to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to subject its nuclear installations to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. That is why my country appeals to the international community to continue to exert pressure on Israel to accept the international community's idea of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone, which would help to stave off the imminent threats to the peace and security of the Middle East region.

My delegation is calling not only for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, but also for all weapons of mass destruction to be banned from the Middle East. Such a ban would cover biological and chemical weapons and other weapons that could increase tension and undermine stability in this very important part of the world, which has so long suffered from numerous fierce conflicts. The most recent was the Iraqi regime's perfidious invasion of Kuwait and that regime's use of biological and chemical weapons against its own people, in the north of Iraq, action that threatens Iraq's neighbours.

I wish to commend the efforts of the Special Commission established under Security Council resolution 687 (1991), and particularly the efforts of Ambassador Richard Butler, which have made it possible to lay the foundation for genuine peace and stability in the Gulf region and to guarantee its peoples the right to live in peace and security.

Ms. Sand-Trigo (International Committee of the Red Cross): At the outset, I would like to state that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies fully shares the views expressed in this statement.

Seldom, if ever, has a resolution of the General Assembly been implemented as rapidly or in such a determined manner as resolution 51/45 S of 10 December 1996, calling for a new international agreement to ban anti-

personnel mines. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomes and fully endorses the new international treaty adopted by the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on 18 September 1997. Less than one year after this Assembly called for its elaboration, States will be invited to sign in Ottawa on 3 and 4 December a legally binding instrument outlawing anti-personnel mines. This extraordinary accomplishment by States, civil society and international institutions shows that the international community can take decisive action for the sake of humanity.

In this connection, we would like to warmly congratulate the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and its Coordinator, Jody Williams, on being awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

The adoption of a new international norm prohibiting anti-personnel mines is a milestone event, not only for the speed with which it was elaborated but also because it is the first time that a weapon in widespread use by armed forces throughout the world is being prohibited and withdrawn because of its appalling humanitarian consequences.

The ICRC particularly welcomes the absolute and unambiguous character of the new treaty banning the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines. We are fully committed to ensuring that this norm is universally adhered to and implemented in the shortest possible time. We are convinced that the clear norm contained in the Ottawa treaty is the basis of its moral and political credibility and will facilitate its universalization, even if some may have difficulty in accepting this norm immediately.

As with other instruments of international humanitarian law and of arms control law, universality will be the result of a historical process. The essential elements are public abhorrence of the use of a particular weapon and the consistent exercise by States of the political will to ensure that the norm is adhered to and respected.

The ICRC appeals to all States to sign the Ottawa treaty in December and to make ratification of this instrument one of their top humanitarian priorities for 1998 and beyond. We encourage Governments when signing to announce that, consistent with article 18, they will provisionally apply the basic commitments contained in article 1 even before the treaty enters into force. We hope that even those States unable to sign this treaty in December will undertake the military and policy adjustments with a view to their signing and/or adherence at an early date.

The signing of the Ottawa treaty will only mark the beginning of the end of the global humanitarian crisis caused by anti-personnel mines. The human and social legacy of the landmine scourge has only barely begun to be addressed. Being maimed by an illegal weapon will bring little solace to future victims of uncleared mines. Today's child amputee, often with no hope of an artificial limb, will find scant comfort in a total ban. Therefore, we urge all Governments to mobilize the resources needed for long-term programmes of mine awareness and of mine clearance and for the care and rehabilitation of landmine victims. In this context, it is worth mentioning the work already undertaken by the ICRC and many national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to provide emergency care and medical and rehabilitative assistance to victims of mines.

As we move towards the elimination of anti-personnel mines, the ICRC encourages States to ensure that the minimum rules relating to this weapon are also strengthened through the early entry into force of Protocol II of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCWC), as amended on 3 May 1996. Even for States which will adhere to the Ottawa treaty, being additionally a party to the CCWC's Protocol II will provide significant advantages. First, the rules and humanitarian protections in Protocol II regarding booby traps, anti-vehicle mines and other devices will apply both in internal armed conflicts and in those between States parties. Secondly, if a State party to the Ottawa Treaty is engaged in an armed conflict with a State bound only by the CCWC's amended Protocol II, the latter will be obliged to implement minimum norms and humanitarian protections. Specifically, it will bear clear legal responsibility for the removal of mines, booby traps and other devices at the end of hostilities. Thirdly, parties to the CCWC's Protocol II will have the right to participate in annual meetings of States parties and future Review Conferences where further development of the Convention will be considered.

While adhering to amended Protocol II of the CCWC, States should also adhere to Protocol IV on the prohibition of the use and transfer of blinding laser weapons, so that this important norm of international humanitarian law can enter into force at the earliest possible date. Non-parties should adhere to all four Protocols.

The ICRC also welcomes the historic entry into force this year of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment in The Hague of the Organization for the

Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to oversee its implementation. We commend all those Governments whose tireless work over more than 20 years of negotiations have constructed this bulwark against a return to the horrors of chemical warfare in the battlefield. This Convention represents a major reinforcement of the long-standing norm of international humanitarian law against the use of poison as a means of warfare. We urge those States which have not yet done so to adhere to the Chemical Weapons Convention. This should also be the occasion for those which have maintained reservations to the 1925 Geneva Protocol to withdraw them.

No less urgent is the need for equipping the Biological Weapons Convention with its own compliance monitoring system. We hope that ongoing efforts to develop such a regime will be pursued with far more vigour than has been evident to date, and that a special conference of States parties will be held well before the next Review Conference to adopt the required measures. In keeping with basic obligations undertaken in the BWC we call on all Governments to exercise strict oversight in the fields of microbiology, genetic engineering and biotechnology to ensure that the rapid developments currently being witnessed will be used for humanity and will not be turned against it.

This year we have witnessed important successes as a mechanism to permanently eliminate chemical warfare has come into full force. We are also seeing a weapon which has inflicted untold suffering on civil populations on the verge of being outlawed and purged from the arsenals of nations. However, in the coming decades the potential for the development of particularly heinous and indiscriminate arms will continue to outpace the ability of mankind to respond. It is for this reason that States bear a particular obligation, under article 36 of Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, to determine whether weapons under development would, in some or all circumstances, be prohibited by the rules of international humanitarian law.

We believe that a great deal of the suffering we have witnessed from the use of currently prohibited arms, and the costs associated with their elimination, could have been avoided if the norms of international humanitarian law had been more scrupulously taken into account before weapons were developed and deployed. We suggest that in an era of rapid technological advances, the obligation to examine the humanitarian law implications of all new weapons, including those assumed to be "non-lethal", must be taken with the utmost seriousness. This means that potential weapons must be examined not only in the light of treaty law relating to specific named weapons, but also in the light of the basic rules of international humanitarian law that prohibit the use of weapons that are inherently indiscriminate or are of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering. The ICRC, for its part, will continue to follow such developments carefully, in keeping with its mandate for the promotion and development of international humanitarian law.

The Chairman: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Al-Anbuge (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The representative of Israel has falsified facts regarding my country's compliance with its obligations under Security Council resolution 687 (1991). In this regard, I would like to clarify the following points. Iraq has complied with the basic obligations in section C of resolution 687 (1991). The Executive Chairman of the Special Commission (UNSCOM) refers to this in his report in document S/1997/774 dated 6 October 1997, as does the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in his report in document S/1997/779 dated 8 October 1997.

The Executive Chairman of the Special Commission stated in paragraph 147 of document S/1997/774 that:

> "It should be recognized that UNSCOM has registered significant achievements in the disarmament field and is well launched in the field of monitoring."

The Executive Chairman also stated in paragraph 148 of the same report that:

> "The present report registers the progress that has been made in a number of important fields and the Executive Chairman hopes this will be recognized by the Council and perhaps more particularly by Iraq. The instances of cooperation that have been brought about by, for example, serious application to the aims of the July 1997 programme of work have borne fruit. The Commission hopes that this will further encourage such cooperation."

Recognition of Iraq's compliance with its obligations was reiterated by the Director General of IAEA, who, in paragraph 77 of his report, said that:

"Although certain documentary evidence is missing and some gaps in knowledge remain, the following can be stated with regard to Iraq's clandestine programme:

— There are no indications to suggest that Iraq was successful in its attempt to produce nuclear weapons. Iraq's explanation of its progress towards the finalisation of a workable design for its nuclear weapons is considered to be consistent with the resources and time scale indicated by the available programme documentation."

If the representative of Israel can bemoan the insecurity that prevails in the region and the problem of disarmament, imagine what he could say about Israel's hundreds of atomic bombs, its extensive stockpile of chemical and biological weapons and long-range ballistic missiles. Imagine what he could also say about his country's refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place its nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards.

Although Israel is the only country that the Security Council called upon in resolution 487 (1981) to place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards, Israel has not implemented that resolution or other Security Council resolutions that call on it to give up its nuclear options. What is more, this country continues its expansionist policy in the occupied Arab territories, which is the most serious of the threats to international and regional peace and security.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): The representative of Israel raised some baseless allegations against my country, which I categorically reject. I think Israel's intentions in raising such allegations are completely clear to all members of international society. They are trying to divert the attention of the international society away from Israel's nuclear threat to the region, and their militaristic policies, toward some unfounded stories. It is ironic to hear allegations from somebody whose Government has not ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or accepted International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

Iran, for its part, has ratified the NPT and opened its activities to IAEA inspection. I think Israel, instead of raising irrelevant and baseless allegations against others, should address the legitimate concerns of the international community over its acquisition of weapons of mass destruction.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.